

«The Secret to success»: notes on the social trajectory of professional skateboarders

*Billy Graeff Bastos**

*Marco Paulo Stigger***

Abstract: This article addresses specific real life cases of the social trajectory of skateboarders who managed their skateboarding career whilst not being part of mainstream sponsorship schemes. In skateboarding, sponsorship is almost the only viable means to be professionally and thus financially stable. This study carried out taking into consideration: the pros and cons of the skateboarding milieu, the lives of the people involved in the sport, and the means by which they exercise and manage their chosen profession. Data was obtained using research techniques such as: semi structured interviews, participant observation and document-based research.

Key words: Skating. Lifestyle. Sociology. Sports.

1 INTRODUCTION

This article addresses specific real life cases of the social trajectory of. The term “trajectory” used herein does not have the same meaning as in physics, where it relates to ballistics, but rather, as an indeterminate non pre-defined route. However, it is not fully random in time and space, as it has been historically constructed. Hence the insistent attempt in identifying peculiarities typical of the universe at hand and the trajectory of the interviewees that have been successful in their careers. Such as in Bourdieu (1996, p. 81) who affirms:

[...] one cannot understand a trajectory, i.e. the social aging that inevitably goes hand-in-hand with biological aging, is independent

* Master in Sciences of the Human Movement by the UFRGS School of Physical Education.

** Doctor in Sports Sciences and Physical Education. Professor at the UFRGS School of Physical Education. Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil. E-mail: stigger@adufgrs.ufrgs.br Billy Bastos, Marcos Stigger

from it, unless the successive conditions where it occurred are constructed; hence, the set of objective relationships associated with the subject at hand – in at least a series of conditions relevant to the field – to a set of other subjects involves in the same field and that participated in the same space of possible occurrences. Prior construction is also the condition for any serious assessment of personality called by a name, i.e. the set of positions taken up simultaneously at the same time by a socially instituted biological individuality that provides support to a series of attributes and attribution that enable its intervention as an efficient subject in different fields.

One peculiarity typical of the skateboarding milieu is that it is only possible to be a professional skateboarder and to make a living as such when they reach the level of “sponsored”, i.e. the most common source of income of professional skateboarders is sponsorship by private companies. Hence, the subject matter of this study is to differentiate individuals who managed their skateboarding career whilst not being part of mainstream sponsorship schemes, examining how they reached their goal, the incorporation of asset and pertinent provisions to the field of skateboarding.

2 METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

In terms of methodology, the study endeavored to know, understand and translate a culture that is constructed around the skateboard. The first intellectual tool used even before the selection of techniques was to understand that the end (not the goal) of this investigative journey was “the broadening of the human discourse universe” (GEERTZ, 1989, p. 24).

In terms of “hands-on”, this study used three methodological procedures: observation, interview and

document analysis. The type of observation used was “in general terms the experience of the investigator within the context to be investigated, for an extended period” (STIGGER, 2002, p. 8), followed by systematic field logging. Noting the discourse and social contexts came before the objective of “inscribing” them. Thus, something that took place in the past and that exists only when it occurred was transformed into a written report that can be used as a reference (GEERTZ, 1989, p. 29). The context of this study started at the skateboarding park at Vila do Instituto de Aposentadorias e Pensões dos Industriários (IAPI)¹, in Porto Alegre, the initial study locus, and was later developed by accompanying skateboarders to other venues in order to make an acquaintance with their network of peers. Sometimes there were visits to a so-called skateboarders’ house, where a number of professional skateboarders live near the skateboarding park. For this reason the researchers attended competitions that were held in different municipalities of the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre, e.g. Novo Hamburgo and São Leopoldo, and meetings, e.g. in the Legislative Assembly, the World Social Forum Social and the Participative Budget of Porto Alegre (accompanying the skateboarders) to skateboarding shops, etc. This interaction lasted for two years.

The second aforementioned procedure was the interviews. Under this study, as a semi-structured interview modality. This investigative technique was by no means a random choice; it was chosen in that it is a privileged tool for works of this nature, as “speaking reveals structural conditions, summary of values, norms and symbols (where the form of expression is part of these features)” (MINAYO, 1996, p. 109-110). Furthermore, from the viewpoint of a spokesperson, it implies, historical, socioeconomic and cultural conditions of interest.

¹ Public park especially built for skateboarding at Bairro IAPI. The neighborhood (or Vila IAPI) was created in the 1940s and originated from the Institute of Retirement Funds and Pensions for Industrial Workers.

The semi-structured interview modality was also preferred to other ones because “[...] it detains the quality of enumerating, as comprehensively as possible, issues that the researcher wished to address in his field investigation, based on the hypothesis or assumptions, obviously arisen from the definition of the object under investigation ” (MINAYO, 1996, p. 121). Eighteen interviews were carried out with fourteen sponsored skateboarders², one entrepreneur and one director. Names used hereunder are alias.

The third and last research technique used was document analysis, given that “not only living people are sources of information”, and also because “[...] document analysis can be a valuable technique to address qualitative data by complementing information obtained via other techniques or by revealing new aspects of a theme or issue” (LÜDKE, 1986, p. 38).

For sure, the term document might suggest some limitations associated with a sheet of sealed, water-marked or stamped A4 paper. For the purpose of this study, it is construed as any material expression of a cultural universe. But one cannot be limited merely by “paper sources” (GIL, 1999, p. 160), considering that the privileged communication media for skateboarders is the internet, which by no means is related to “paper”.

Hence, any type of object that disclosed information about the skateboarding culture was considered a document, including a small collection of stickers, flyers, folders, photos, posters, news published on websites, newspaper clippings, etc. Although not every document was used in the dissertation and in this study, collecting them enabled us to select the most interesting/relevant for this study.

² Professionals – people who make a living from skateboarding and sponsored amateurs who are on the brink of becoming professionals.

3 THE BEGINNING: MOVING OUT OF THE «HOOD»

Initially, and almost invariably, the observed informers and/or interviewees identified to design this study started skateboarding with their neighbors or brothers. Hence, the first steps (or rocking³) on the skateboard are like those done with kids from the “hood”, where the skateboarding was just another game to be played (ball-bearing carts, yo-yo, roller skates, etc.), sometimes popular because it was trendy and readily replaced with a new fad. There were few references, and as a rule, the configurations detained whatever possibilities of interaction within themselves. Technical development was limited, as were factors such as spatiality, quality and volume of material, and scope of learning references.

It can be said that this was also the characteristic of a certain period, as nowadays local configurations are not organized as in the beginning; it is believed that nowadays skateboarding is not(?) more decentralized. Or, as in the words of a 26 year old skateboarder with at least thirteen years of practice, “[...] there was a “tribe” from the south zone, form downtown and from the north zone... they were a mixture” (Guto). In other words, it is believed that nowadays skateboarders converge to central points, even if they still ride their own neighborhood primarily. Nevertheless, even if he was not a regular in a skateboarding park near a central region, the skateboarder would be able to obtain information about skateboarding events via the internet that were taking place outside his neighborhood. This fact was evidenced in an interview given by one of the study subjects who claimed that the internet has become “fundamental” to the “development” of skateboarding. Unlike in the past, when there were no “mixtures”, no internet, and local configurations were limited to themselves.

³ Rocking is the most basic move in skateboarding; it means “pushing” the ground with the bottom of the foot in order to move the skateboard. Rocking is to skateboarding what walking is for running.

In terms of the first locally-based skateboarding experiences, the interviews clearly show that they are at the socialization and almost family-based level (often totally involving all family members), and that the actors perceive it as the result of living in a neighborhood, where there seems to be a sector defining skateboarding practice in different places. Although these local configurations address the same core subject matter in different venues, they retain (or used to retain) their own peculiarities.

The more local the configurations, the less they could offer to the skateboarder. For example, of one hundred skateboarders that live in different neighborhoods but that keep in touch, the news that a new part or equipment (wheels or tennis shoes), or even a magazine, is disseminated in geometric progression (like a magazine would do it). One skateboarder can lend the magazine to another group of eight or ten skateboarders and so far and so on (another group and another yet); compared to a universe of ten or eight skateboarders that live in the same neighborhood, this dissemination occurs in arithmetic progression: exchanging ends with these eight or ten individuals. This would also occur with the repertoire of tricks that are disseminated more comprehensively when they meet in venues other than their neighborhood.

A core factor is the learning issue. The learning modality that was associated with skateboarding points or parks corresponds to a simple and mimetic system based on a handful of spatially and geographically limited references. Together with a new configuration, more focused on skateboarding and centralizing references, they have access to a series of new media. These new knowledge forms of learning about new forms inspire some of the individuals to have a new relationship with skateboarding (both with the equipment and anything related to it); of embracing a new way of doing and learning.

The nature, type and quality of the activities in which skateboarders are involved in are important factors for the new learning modality, as they lead to significant changes in relation to the local configuration. Meeting with their peers in the central parks to ride their skateboard and swap information becomes a routine activity. This is where the sessions⁴ (some are veritable “treasure hunts” throughout the city), competitions, photo shoots and filming come into the picture. Informers bond with other skateboarders and participate in sessions and group competitions, learn where photographers and video makers are shooting and go meet with them. This becomes a new learning component that extrapolates the domain of sports gestures, according to Damo (2005, p. 305):

[...] in every sport, the dimension of experiences lived has a different value. Building stronger muscles is not the only professional educational component; it must address the political economy of the field that includes the mechanical control of gestures.

Hence, this new learning modality reminds one of the concept of the *habitus*, a “socialized subjectivity” (BOURDIEU; WACQUANT, 1995, p. 87) that hereunder is used as a tool for understanding, taking into account its components and the practical and efficient learning of the social milieu. Despite the fact that the *habitus* in itself does not define positions within a common field (but rather the global and specific volume for the subjects’ asset) where it is a system of dispositions, it is observed that in the specific case of the reality under study, incorporating dispositions is fundamental to the lifestyle of these full-time skateboarders (professionals or on their way to being such). Incorporation is related to: a) acknowledging and accessing relevant information that can be converted into incorporated asset (films, photos, magazines, etc.); and b) to being present (wishing and succeeding in doing it) at the venues and periods

⁴ Sessions are like real treasure hunts along the city’s streets. Skateboarders, usually in small groups, roam the city streets trying to find venues to go skateboarding.

they consider privileged in the universe at hand (central parks, sessions, competitions, photo and film shoots). Thus, over time, the objects of this disposition, their accessibility and handling become important assets as they are responsible for a large part of the distribution of the subjects along the field.

In terms of the new learning modality and when and where it takes place, it is also relevant that it should include the appreciation principle of what should be learned, i.e. what is sufficiently relevant to dedicate time, money, etc. to acquiring and/or incorporating it. Talking to Crânio, it was clear that creating something new is an asset in the skateboarding milieu, even if it is “second hand innovation”. In that there is are limited possibilities to create new tricks, it is acceptable to be aware of videos and magazines, specially imported publications, in order to “discover” a new trick and include it into their repertoire, which in turn will make the discoverer popular and respected but not only the mere imitation of a new trick is appreciated. Even running the risk of incurring in some kind of stage process, which is not intended, it could be said that after the skateboarder learns the basic and easy tricks (local configuration and in the neighborhood), he then learns new and more difficult tricks (under this study, when he learns a skateboard dedicated configuration) and tries innovative tricks (even if they are second hand). This creates a differentiated identity for the individual – the “last stage” – as evidenced by Coral and Goró:

C: Ah, when I first started skateboarding and I started to get to a certain level, like, I learned how to do... then, like, I started to put in my own stuff,... like, my own style, I changed, right? (Coral).

G: In truth, like, we're always on the lookout, we always know what's new everywhere in the world. New videos, there's always something new and you have to keep up. Humm. And since nowadays you already have some skateboarding skills, you can already create dude, right? Then, like, I can do a trick here, something that no one's done

before. Then you like, think of something in your head and you go on and do that trick (Goró).

AUTHORS: Have you ever created a new trick?

G: Man, I did this one trick... like, not that I invented it, but it was a combination of tricks I never saw anyone do before... Front nose grind shovit, back reverse. Like, what else? Maybe someone's done it, but like, I never seen it. Once I also did a front shovit grind... what else? (Goró).

Therefore, the title of this article was not randomly chosen, as the individual road – the trajectory – travelled by the group of the interviewees was a) to keep on skateboarding, or to start doing it in very poor conditions, i.e. when it was still not a trendy sport modality; b) to “leave the hood” in order to join a new and more central skateboarding configuration. Another reason was to incorporate it into a field where there are many examples to be copied and with much information in circulation in the media on its different times and venues, creating or recreating the diverse skateboarder's styles; and c) learning (absorbing and developing) a new learning modality supported by the previous learned one (mimetic), quantitatively and qualitatively expanded by information sources and examples directly associated with time and venues (their acknowledgement and experience) of the new configuration – can help understand the genetics of the field discussed hereunder – the skateboarding milieu - based on the investigated group.

4 THE CONSTITUTION OF AN INCLINATION, OF A SET OF DISPOSITIONS AND ASSETS AND THEIR INCORPORATION

Although it is not necessary to mention the mobilization of the subject as a whole, as this study addresses the incorporation of a set of dispositions and assets and the

constitution of an inclination, it is necessary to break down the specific asset constitution process related to the skateboarding milieu. Skateboarding history data collection was relevant to draft the text that supports this study; however, in this case, it was necessary to use the contemporary aspects related to the constitution of the field at hand, the habitus⁵, dispositions, assets and inclinations.

The specific inclination to skateboarding was not a random event among the interviewees. It was the launching pad that gave them an identity in their social life and lifestyle. In other words, inclination is “[...] the propensity and skill to apprehend (material and/or symbolic) a certain category of objects or practices classified and classifying; it is the generating formula that is part of the lifestyle principle” (BOURDIEU, 1983, p. 83). In that it is acknowledged that the interest and continued practice of skateboarding did not go against their inclination, it is reasonable to affirm that it was in favor of their inclination.⁶ This is the issue, although it is not possible to go back to the time when the inclination was “born” (nor is it deemed necessary), it must be identified in the genesis of the lifestyle. Their inclination to skateboarding is also the inclination to socialization enabled by the skateboarding milieu. Stigger (2002, p. 245) addresses this issue stating that:

[...] sports activities provide references that enable individuals to organize their social life, whereby the socialization process of group members is developed by living in a

⁵ “(...) schemes that generate classifications and classifiable practices that work in but do not mean an explicit representation, which are the product of the incorporation as dispositions of a different position in the social venue” (BOURDIEU, 1991, p. 114).

⁶ When they were asked why they started skateboarding, interviewees gave the following answers:

“F: I got like hooked, dude! I’d watch the guys riding the board and I knew that’s what I wanted to do. I don’t know why...”

“G: gee, I don’t know. Some weird stuff going on. A very strong feeling.”

“I: I also don’t know why... [laughter]. Because... gee, I can’t even explain it, a weird thing. When my foot touched skateboard I could feel like a really strong passion... and it stayed.”

“L: who knows!. I thought there was some rapport, I don’t know why. But I really dug the skateboarders, also, which is really like style.”

group and sharing different forms of living in the world, which are [or can be] expressed both in and out of the venue where the game is played.⁷

This aspect is clear within the empiric context of this study, when one of the interviewees was asked which were the best aspects of skateboarding; to which he replied (in a heartbeat); the “friendship”:

Ah, like, you make friends with people... you get to meet more people when you're in competitions. That's when you really get to know what they're all about. If they invite you, like: “ah, let's stay all in the same hotel”, then, like, “ah, let's”. Then, like, if the person invites someone else you don't know, then you'll be friends with that person. Maybe you won't be really friends, but you'll meet the person. And then you get to make a lot of friends (Ilton).

They also affirm that they started skateboarding influenced by other guys and because of the sense of adventure and fun they had: “because of the other guys, like, from my street who would invite me “hey dude, c'mon, let's do some skateboarding, let's go do something... (Goró).

D: Skateboarding for me was always having fun... with my bothers... it was wild, we'd just go... we'd get a whole bunch of guys and take off, stealing the plywood they used to make the political campaign posters at election time to make a ramp. That was the wildest, skateboarding all day long, and in

⁷ Reference to the fact that there is no known study that was concerned in addressing specifically the transferability or transfer of the dispositions incorporated to sports, except for some generalizations based on very specific configurations with practically no variations, associated to professionalism. Although it is possible to observe that there is an overall trend to think that “sports venues are simply o 'homological' to other social venues...”, that exploiting them helps us to have a better understanding of those venues, the means of exploiting them helps us better understand them” and that when references from Bourdieu are used “another word infers more meaning to these convergences – the habitus, ‘a socialized subjectivity’, according to Bourdieu, or yet ‘incorporated social’, law inscribed on bodies [sic] (*lex insita*), a sociocultural device in the form of a body, where all social influences are introduced into the organism to turn it into a reference limitation that structures and is structured” (VIGARELLO, 2005, p. 190-191).

those days we didn't even realize that there was money to be made... (Dadinho).

F: I started skateboarding because I could do some jumps. I could jump high, like, jump far.... it was for jumping, 'cause then there were only those big ramps, to fly... (Fera).

This inclination and propensity helped the interviewees to remain skateboarders, where in the more common and collective sense it was the fruit of the second type of socialization that was being disseminated, e.g. central venues. Hence, it was in those venues that the specific character of the individuals that gave their contribution for this study was developed.

The more central venues were the stage of the actors that were the examples who used to show the reality and the social milieu of skateboarding. This stage (field) as incorporated by the interviewees that in turn incorporated it. Bourdieu believes that “[...] a field is integrated by a series of objective historical relationships” (BOURDIEU; WACQUANT, 1995, p. 23), existing within “[...] a first order objectivity that is established by the distribution of material resources and” by “the means of appropriation of assets and values socially scarce (types of assets, according to the technical language used by Bourdieu)” (WACQUANT, 1995, p. 18).

The field under the scope of this study comprises the different venues/time: the central skateboarding venue (IAPI Skateboarding Park, Praça da Matriz), the session, the photo and film shooting sessions, competitions, travelling to the competitions, meetings held at the home of one or more actors. Hence, the skateboarder is a part of the field and the field is a part of the skateboarder; the skateboarders alone are not the subjects of this field. A great number of subjects that play different roles are also part of it: the specialized media, reporters, editors, photographers, video makers, administrators (Associations, Federations, Confederation) and entrepreneurs (or company officers, distributors, team managers,

salespersons and managers), who will not be addressed in their totality under this study.

What is addressed is the trajectory, both individual and collective, where the next step will cover dispositions and assets, given that “the proximity in the social venue [the skateboarders themselves!] is conducive to bringing them closer together: individuals inscribed in a restricted venue will be at the same time closer to each other (due to their properties, dispositions and inclination), more inclined to become closer and also easier to contact and mobilize” (BOURDIEU, 1990, p. 25). Thus, a group is being addressed, albeit perhaps not necessarily organized as such (although sporadically it may occur), but it “works” as a group, and as such it shares the same range of dispositions and inclinations that are mobilized, based on the same assets and participate in the same venues and time (field).

Even so, it must be noted that either as a group or as a “sample”, the interviewees keep their own particularities (similar but different).

5 THE SUSHIMAN AND THE EGG SANDWICH: THE MATERIALITY OF CONDITIONS THAT LEAD TO SUCCESS

An event can be very clarifying about what it bespeaks: two references for the same person about two others. The companion (Maria) of one of the interviewed skateboarders introduced the topic of the imminent change that would take place with the people that lived with one of the skateboarders. The change would take place because the mother of one of the roommates was interested in the house where they lived, where she wanted to open a restaurant. When asked about it, the skateboarder replied that it would be another Oriental food restaurant, as his mother already owned one. Maria asked when he would be able to make them some sushi. Amazing

news: the interlocutor was actually a sushi man. Later, talking again to Maria, we addressed the characteristics of another skateboarder and how he was finding it hard to adjust to the house rules. We were told that he was unable to cope with the day-to-day chores, from her point of view, such as keeping his room clean and tidy or cooking reasonably well-balanced meals at the right eating times. This was her adamant remark about the skateboarder's diet: "[...] all he eats are egg sandwiches; all I see him bring back from the grocery store is a little bag of eggs and buns". The trajectory of each of the abovementioned skateboarders was already known and then it was possible to compare the glaring difference between the "egg sandwich" and the sushiman.

We agree with Setton (2002, p. 61), who defines habitus as "a notion that [...] helps to think about the characteristics implied in a social identity [...]" but if this notion fails to address practical examples, it becomes weak, i.e. "[...] we cannot capture the deeper logic of the social world unless we submerge into the particularity of a history situated and dated empiric reality [...]" (BOURDIEU, 1990, p. 15).

To some degree, this group under study is different from the rest of the skateboarding social milieu due to a main reason, e.g. they are sponsored and make money (or obtain other material advantages) to do their skateboarding. This characteristic, however, is not a distinct random feature, but rather it is very well placed due to the specific form of relating to everything associated to the skateboarding milieu. Hence, it is believed that it is closely associated with a series of socially determining factors that are addressed hereunder as dispositions and assets, based on real life cases.

If the habitus is a set of dispositions, it does not serve any type of determinism, as "[...] it is a structuring determinism that operates within the subjects, albeit being... nor strictly individual or completely determining behaviors in itself" (WACQUANT, 1995, p. 25).

With Bourdieu⁸ the notion of asset (social, cultural, economic, symbolic, etc.) takes on the characteristic of existing in the incorporated form, especially the body-related asset⁹. Its incorporation ensues from the social experience that is closely associated with and correlated with positions occupied within the fields where these experiences occur. The specificity of the trendy asset, which is a modality of the cultural asset, is related to the body and sports but that would not be enough to discuss it. It is preferable to talk about assets, where perhaps one of them (and just perhaps) the body related asset¹⁰ (technical) is the most important.

Both notions (disposition and asset) are interlocked within themselves and with the notion of habitus and field, “[...] the concepts of habitus and field are relational as they are only fully functional in relation to the other” (WACQUANT, 1995, p. 25), which is the reason why this discussion is presented in this manner so far.

Based on observations and on the interviewees, it was possible to conclude that historical characteristics (conditions) and inclination forged in the subjects a set of dispositions and a specific class of assets.

A certain position in the field depends on a series of assets (volume and specificity). The social milieu of skateboarding seems to provide fine examples of how this takes place. Skateboarding at the competition and sponsorship level, even if collectively as already mentioned – is also a very individual practice that can sometimes be solitary. Many skateboarders handle their business single-handed, i.e. media, entrepreneurs, etc., and it is not an uncommon sight to see them skateboarding with heads phone on, isolating themselves to a certain extent while they practice.

⁸ Other works.

⁹ “[...] the cultural asset has its own peculiarity, e.g. to exist in the incorporated status quo as awareness and action schemes, principles of vision and division, of mental structures” (BOURDIEU, 1991, p.117).

¹⁰ The body-related asset, for sure, is the one that builds the specificity of the field, it is the most relevant in the most comprehensive configuration of skateboarding, but it is a sub-venue of the field, the skateboarding sponsored sub-universe.

For this reason and other determining factors as well – such as the fact that there are no clubs or entities and/or institutions to support or organize this practice, which will be assessed under a dedicated chapter – it is possible to clearly observe the correlation between asset incorporation (trajectory), positions and the development of social factors in the field under study. Within this context, skateboarding is different from other individual practices, such as gymnastics. In these other professional configurations there is a disciplining structure that encompasses a series of activities, where in the case of skateboarding they are carried out by the skateboarders. Likewise, the skateboarding milieu is different from collective practices in that the structure is even more comprehensive, such as in the case of soccer.

It is mandatory to discuss the socioeconomic conditions as determining factors the “success” of the skateboarders that were interviewed under this study. The basis of a large part of the possibilities of incorporating dispositions and conquering assets is associated to their walk of life, educational, family and professional background. Everything is directly or indirectly associated to their place in the social venue or walk of life. Some can speak a foreign language, are educated in arts (Oriental culinary, for example), usually travel abroad with their family. Other are inarticulate even in Portuguese, have rudimentary eating habits and rarely travel, let alone with their family.

6 TO BE A SKATEBOARDER: A LIFESTYLE

The gateway to the sub-universe of sponsored skateboarding does not imply a radical change in the lifestyle of skateboarders. In principle, they continue doing to a greater or lesser extent the same things as before. Mainly due to the fact that when they become part of the sub-universe they are already familiar with the bigger picture and its symbols and signs. However, in order to remain in the sub-universe requires

undergoing deep changes. The most common is for the skateboarder to “win” or “get” sponsorship in the amateur categories when he can still combine school and skateboarding, however precariously.¹¹ Later, after a series of injunctions¹² (things that have to be renounced on the one hand, access to other things on the other) they proceed by interacting with the specific body-related asset of the field, bringing into a specific range of dispositions a more stable repertoire and circumstantial recruiting.

The most relevant renunciation is probably related to their nomad lifestyle. They must accept and even have the desire to travel frequently to competitions, film shoots, demos and autograph sessions, which requires dropping out of school, being away from home and loved ones, to mention but a few factors. Some of the interviews shed light on their nomadic lifestyle. Goró said he spends eight months away from home, and gives further details:

Last year I must've been home some six or seven months"[...] "you travel two weeks, come back for a month, then travel two months, come back for a month"[...] "I've travelled [...] in Brazil, I think I've been to most parts. Maybe I still have to visit Mato Grosso and some parts up north, after e Ceará [...] I've been to all South America [...] Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile [...] almost all of South America [...] now I'm scheduled to go to Colombia. I'm going with Nike. I know North America well [...] I haven't been to Canada yet, but I was close, in Oregon, which is right next to Canada".

About Europe, where he has been five times, he said “[...] the longest I stayed there was a month and a half”[...]

¹¹ None of the interviewees finished college and all felt there was a certain incompatibility between their lifestyle as skateboarders and school. A set of data drives the study on this characteristic, e.g. dropping out of school at a young age and problems at school, even in the case when sponsorship is not yet in the picture. This study cannot address this peculiarity, except when it is part of the objectives hereof.

¹² Injunction is a situation created by the circumstances in which the actor must choose which path he will take, as if at a crossroads.

“This year (2005) I’ve been to Europe twice and once to the USA.

It is also evidenced that they must remain in the sub-universe: being familiar with the aspects of international travel, as aforementioned, where the lack thereof may lead to questioning the skateboarder’s position in the field and his status (social asset); managing their own image, which influences the interest of the sponsor(s); carrying out their own tasks and errands; knowing the entrepreneurs and establishing a good rapport with them to guarantee sponsorship; and having contact with the specialized media that is one of the most relevant means of disseminating their image and promoting them.

The purpose of this discussion of dispositions and assets, both from the theoretical point of view and the specificity of the universe under study, is to explain how a certain range of practical knowledge (dispositions) is developed, all of which are necessary to join and remain in the sub-universe of sponsored skateboarding. In other words, this study attempts to show how a certain set of dispositions and assets are incorporated based on the constitution of an inclination. Hence, it is mandatory to recognize that without being part of the operation the dispositions would not work, i.e. they would be inefficient¹³ (MAUSS, 1974). For this reason it was also necessary to identify in the field these dispositions that are ingrained as a peculiar lifestyle, full of meaning and demanding in terms of full-time dedication in order to be efficient in their use and incorporation. The theoretical constructions by Damo (2005, p. 241) are fully embraced in this study, purporting that in the professional soccer milieu it is possible when three characteristics are

¹³ Marcel Mauss wrote that an act could only be considered efficient if it were identified within a tradition. For this reasons the author used the notion of o “social nature of the habitus”, where ‘habits’ vary not only according to trends and its imitations, but first and foremost with society, education, convenience and trends, and prestige” (1974, p. 214.), i.e. with social milieus, and traditions mediated by the habitus.

observed “[...] the principle of will – one must have the desire to be; of eligibility – one must be chosen; and of integrality – one must ‘breathe’ soccer”.

The level of commitment required stands out in this sub-universe of sponsored skateboarding (principle of integrality), which is a differentiating disposition. Some interviewees reported that living in the skateboarding milieu is a full-time occupation, even interfering with their love life:

Ah, I wake up (...) and then, like... I have breakfast and I go skateboarding. If I'm home... sometimes I travel a lot (...) have to go to photo shoots, filming... but that's the way it is. (C)

Skateboarding was always a hobby for me. But this hobby is much more than just a hobby. It's actually my whole life. Skateboarding taught me a lot, even who I am, the way I am. (C)

I think about going to college. The problem is there's no time (...). There's too much running about. I think of doing something well done. (C)

Skateboarding takes a lot out of you. Photos, films, because of the sponsors, they demand it. (C)

Girlfriends can be a kind of a pain? Dudes in the skateboarding business travel a lot. It's a pain but I date, you know? (G);

I live play... I wake up and I do what has to be done during the day, and I have obligations, right, as a skateboard professional I have to travel, go on tours for the brands that sponsor. There's Always trips, photo shoots, and skateboarding every day, which is what I've always done dude, filming and photo shoots, that's my day-by-day, I wake up to what has to be done and go skateboarding (D).

The disposition to carry out their individual attributions is also a differential and differentiating characteristic. Skateboarders use their own lingo to define it – running errands. It means being responsible and being able to be accountable for what they do in the field. Recently, sponsoring companies have created a team manager for the team of skateboarders that promotes a brand, which has resulted in improved collective organization, making some skateboarders feel that their lives are being more and more controlled, as already seen. However, this reality is applicable only to a handful of skateboarders; they are still very much responsible for choosing what they do most of the times. The result is that those who are not willing to run errands will always be more subject to facing hardship in getting and/or keeping their sponsorships.

The excerpt of the interview that best summarized this aspect is presented below:

Ah, skateboarding helped me a lot... because I was always capable... like travelling... I travelled a lot, I learned how to fend for myself... skateboarding was a form of learning how to fend for myself, 'cause like, skateboarding is a street sports, and independent sport. It only depends on you, nothing else; it doesn't depend on something you have to follow. It depends only on you; it's an individual sport. Then you have to be strong, you have to believe, it's not about just following a path and that's it, no way. It depends a lot on you, on your willpower (C).

[fending for yourself means not to] depend on the sponsors to get things done. It's knowing where you have to go, what you have to do... you know... what you have to do! Knowing with who you have to talk to in order to be in the magazines. 'Cause nowadays there's lots of great skateboarders, but they're not sponsored. Let me tell you about Mamá. Mamá is a wicked skateboarder, he's a natural. But he's kinda of quiet, doesn't like to get involved. All he

wants to do is to ride his skateboard. But you've gotta run some errands, be smart, make some contacts, go and call the magazines. “Hey dude, how's it going? Let's do some photos?” you've gotta be on top of things to do it. Call the guys to film, run your errands. Just riding your skateboard ain't enough. There's a whole lot of wicked dudes riding skateboards, but they don't do the errand running thing.

7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conclusion, it can be safely affirmed that taking into account the field's genetics and its historical characteristics, i.e. production and reproduction characteristics, the next step is to identify a specific nature of this genesis from the point of view of the actors of this field, the inclination. This inclination, in turn, is characterized beyond the practice itself, also by sociability and by a sense of fun and adventure. Hence, a sense of collectivity was developed for the practice and for a means of being part of the world at the core points related to skating (configurations accessed, in the case of the interviewees under this study after knowing the practice of skateboarding in the neighborhood and/or family environment), gradually incorporated and built with the field.

This study focused mainly on a group that stands out in the social milieu of skateboarding by a main characteristic, e.g. having sponsorship and being paid (or other material advantages) to ride their skateboards. Historical characteristics (conditions) and the inclination forged in the subjects a set of dispositions and a class of specific assets. The specificity of the trendy asset, which is a modality of the cultural asset, is related to the body and sports. But that would not be enough to discuss it.

It is preferable to talk about assets, where perhaps one of them (and just perhaps) the body related asset (technical) is the most important. The purpose of the presentation of cases

ensuing from observation and interviews was to show the relationship between the global asset and the specific asset, and the importance of the volume of the social asset social (networking, status) and the volume of cultural and educational assets within this environment, as well as the body-related asset corporal relevant to skateboarding, i.e. the relationship between the assets volume and structure, which is a determining factor to understand a particular configuration particular and the role of the subjects:

[...] two individuals retaining a similar global view(?) may differ both in their position and in the stand they take due to the fact that one has much (relatively) economic asset and little cultural asset (for example, the owner of a private company), and the other much cultural asset and little economic asset (a teacher) (BOURDIEU; WACQUANT, 1995, p. 65).

It was found that the beginning of contact with sponsors more often than not is due to doing well in competitions, but that being part of the skateboarding sponsored sub-universe does not depend only on competitions nor on the body-related asset, where videos magazines compete with the competitions and other assets (such as social and educational) competing with the body-related asset as the most important themes.

It was observed that joining the skateboarding sponsored sub-universe does not imply in a radical change to the skateboarders' lifestyle; however, in order to remain in the sub-universe requires deep changes to the routine of the subjects. Permanence is built from a series of injunctions and the renouncing of certain things on the one hand, and access on the other.

It also shows that in order to remain in the sub-universe they must be familiar with the aspects of international travel, where the lack thereof may lead to questioning the skateboarder's position in the field and his status (social asset); managing their own image, which influences the interest of the

sponsor(s); carrying out their own tasks and errands; knowing the entrepreneurs and establishing a good rapport with them to guarantee sponsorship; and having contact with the specialized media that is one of the most relevant means of disseminating their image and promoting them; and a high level of commitment and integrality.

Finally, it was concluded (based on the constructed thinking after pondering on the findings of this study) that educational processes, family life, habits that were “naturalized” throughout life provide better or worse conditions for the individual to conquer sponsorships and to maintain it (added to his own ability to develop and maintain the body-related asset).

One of the interviewees reported that he tried to organize a trip abroad but could not get his documents in order because he needed his father to help him, which became difficult and then was forgotten. The interviewee was not “prepared” to face situations that required speaking another language, arranging for documents (passport, for example), book airplane tickets and hotels. He had never done anything like that before; in other words, he did have in his repertoire of dispositions (*habitus*) the possibility of dealing with paperwork and booking tickets and hotels of dealing with matters in the realm of the bourgeois milieu¹⁴.

Just as it can be affirmed that:

Every time the *habitus* faces objective conditions identical or similar to those from which it was originate, it is perfectly adapted to them and does not require any measure of effort to make a conscious and intentional adaptation; one can affirm the in a certain

¹⁴ “Bourgeoisie means the class of modern capitalists that own social production media and that employ a paid workforce” (ENGELS; MARX, s/d, p. 21) (note to the English edition of the 1888 Communist Manifesto). The ownership of social production media guarantees a privileged relationship between the bourgeois and the goods they produce, whether they are material or cultural; it is conducive to the quasi natural and spontaneous learning of culture” that “is different from all forms of imposed learning, not inasmuch as desired by the cultural ‘venerer’ ideology, by its depth and resilience of its effects, but by the form of relationship with the type of culture it favors” (BOURDIEU, 1983b, p. 97).

sense, the effect of the habitus is redundant as the effect of the field (BOURDIEU; WACQUANT, 1995, p. 92),

it can be affirmed that a set of incorporated dispositions that is not redundant within the field and when it does not have similar conditions to those with which it was built is translated as ineptitude.

“O segredo do sucesso»: apontamentos sobre a trajetória social de skatistas profissionais

Resumo: Este artigo aponta, a partir de casos concretos, para elementos acerca da trajetória social de skatistas que lograram estar no subuniverso dos patrocínios. Em se tratando de *skate*, isso significa praticamente a única possibilidade de profissionalização. São considerados detalhes da constituição e do funcionamento do campo do *skate* em sua totalidade e da vida dos informantes, de seu caminho para incorporar disposições e capitais válidos no contexto do *skate*. Os dados utilizados são provenientes de técnicas de pesquisa como a entrevista semiestruturada, a observação participante e a coleta de documentos.
Palavras-chave: Patinação. Estilo de vida. Sociologia. Esportes.

El secreto del sucesso, apuntes sobre la trayectoria social de skatistas profesionales.

Resumen: Este artículo trata de levantar, a partir de hechos concretos, elementos acerca de la trayectoria social de skatistas que lograron estar en el submundo de los patrocínios. Eso significa prácticamente la única posibilidad de profesionalización. Son considerados detalles de la constitución y del funcionamiento de la rama del *skate* en su totalidad y de la vida de los informantes y de su camino para incorporar disposiciones y capitales válidos en el contexto del *skate*, los datos utilizados son provenientes de técnicas de pesquisa como la entrevista semiestruturada, las observaciones participantes y la colecta de documentos.
Palabras clave: Patinación. Estilo de vida. Sociologia. Deportes.

REFERENCES

BOURDIEU, P. **Pierre Bourdieu**: Sociologia. Translated by Paula Monteiro; Alicia Auzmendi. São Paulo: Ática, 1983.

- BOURDIEU, P. Espaço simbólico e espaço social. In: BOURDIEU, P. **Razões práticas**: sobre a teoria da ação. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1990, p. 13-33.
- BOURDIEU, P. Estruturas Sociais e estruturas mentais. In: **Teoria e Educação**, Porto Alegre, Pannônica, 1991.
- BOURDIEU, P. **Razões práticas**: sobre a teoria da ação. Translated by Mariza Corrêa. Campinas, SP: Papyrus, 1996.
- BOURDIEU, P.; WACQUANT, L. J. D. **Respuestas**: por una antropología reflexiva. Translated by Heléne Levesque Dion; Miguel Hidalgo. Mexico: Grijalbo, 1995.
- DAMO, A. S. **Do dom à profissão**: uma etnografia do futebol de espetáculo a partir da formação de jogadores no Brasil e na França. Tese (Doutorado). Programa de Pós-Graduação em Antropologia Social – PGAS – UFRGS, Porto Alegre: UFRGS, 2005.
- GIL, A. C. **Métodos e técnicas de pesquisa social**. São Paulo: Atlas, 1999.
- GEERTZ, C. **A interpretação das culturas**. Rio de Janeiro: Koogan, 1989.
- LÜDKE, M.; ANDRÉ, M. E.D.A. **pesquisa em educação**: abordagens qualitativas. São Paulo: EDU, 1986.
- MAUSS, M. **Sociologia e antropologia**: com uma introdução à obra de Marcel Mauss, de Claude Lévi-Strauss. Translated by Lamberto Puccinelli. São Paulo, EPU, 1974.
- MINAYO, M. C. de S. **O desafio do conhecimento**: pesquisa qualitativa em saúde. São Paulo: HUCITEC/ABRASCO, 1996.
- SETTON, M. da G. J. A Teoria do habitus em Pierre Bourdieu: uma leitura contemporânea. **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, Rio de Janeiro, n. 20 , p. 60-70. 2002.
- STIGGER, M. P. **Esporte, Lazer e Estilos de Vida**: um estudo etnográfico. Campinas, SP: Autores Associados: Colégio Brasileiro de Ciências do Esporte, 2002.
- VIGARELLO, G. Sistemas de esportes, esportes concorrentes. In: ENCREVÉ, P.; LAGRAVE, R. **Trabalhar com Bourdieu**. Translated by Karina Jannini. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2005.
- WACQUANT, L. J.D. Introducció. In: BOURDIEU, P.; WACQUANT, L., J.D. **Respuestas**: por una antropología reflexiva. Translated by Heléne Levesque Dion; Miguel Hidalgo. Mexico: Grijalbo, 1995.

Received on: 18 Nov 2008

Accepted on: 9 Apr 2009